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New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Woldegerima
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

United Nations peacekeeping operations

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

United Nations peacekeeping operations

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Lieutenant General Derrick Mbuyiselo Mgwebi, Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Major General Jai Shanker Menon, Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force; Lieutenant General Balla Keïta, Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; and Major General Salihu Zaway Uba, Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: At the outset I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting with the Force Commanders of our peacekeeping operations. We have the pleasure of welcoming the Force Commanders to New York this week for our annual conference. This occasion is an opportunity for very useful and valuable exchanges with them. I think that it is particularly relevant and important to hold this meeting under the authority of the Secretary-General and in line with the orientation that has been provided to us. We are stepping up our efforts to make peacekeeping more efficient and effective.

Before deferring to the Force Commanders, I would like to express to them, their officers and soldiers our gratitude for their service, and I would like in particular to pay tribute to the sacrifices made by soldiers under their command.

As you know, Sir, yesterday another two of our peacekeepers from Chad were killed in northern Mali, following other incidents both in Mali and in other countries. Sadly, I also had the occasion to attend the ceremony that paid tribute to the five peacekeepers who were recently killed in the Central African Republic. They accordingly deserve that we pay tribute to them, but they also deserve our best efforts to ensure that our peacekeepers are afforded the best possible conditions in which to discharge their mandates and protect the population, which they must serve now.

Without any further delay, I would suggest giving the floor to the four Force Commanders. Each of them will shed light on the specific aspects of their respective missions. Lieutenant General Mgwebi, Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will address the challenges of conducting military operations in a peacekeeping operation. Major General Menon, Head of Mission and Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, will talk about the challenges of a mission that does not fall under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations but is known as a Chapter VI mission. Lieutenant General Keïta, Force Commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, will address the challenges of robust peacekeeping. We recently had the opportunity together to directly witness those challenges. Lastly, Major General Uba, Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, will talk about the drawdown of a peacekeeping operation, which, as everyone knows, is the case for our operation in Liberia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for the information that he has provided us.

I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Mgwebi.

Lieutenant General Mgwebi: It is an honour and privilege for me to have been asked to brief the Security Council today. I have been with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the past 15 months. MONUSCO is a very complex and politically charged mission. I am going to attempt to cover the challenges that have faced us over the past 15 months. I trust that the challenges of which we will be speaking will be similar to those facing my colleagues who are Force Commanders elsewhere.

One of the most important aspects is the mandate itself. When it comes to the actual drafting of the mandate, it is also critical that its authors take into account that its implementation will be critical for its

success and that any possible exit strategy should be understood at the earliest stages, while taking into account the complexities of the conflict and specific factors, such as the country's size, the fault lines leading to and defining the conflict in its present state and the allocation of resources needed so as to be able to conduct the mission itself. That speaks to the nature of the mandate itself.

Once the mandate has been issued, the Secretariat, the mission and the force's formulation and interpretation of the mandate become critical, because if there is a failure to understand the mission's concept of operation, which underlies campaign planning by the force, challenges and differences of opinion might result in connection with how to move the mission forward. The MONUSCO mandate has just been extended pursuant to resolution 2348 (2017), which calls for the reduction of the force to a troop ceiling of 16,215. That is happening at a very interesting time in the sense that, as a mission and a force, we are expected to deal with the issue of the protection of civilians in a country approximately the size of Western Europe, added to which we are tasked with the objective of supporting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the holding of elections — which was not included in the previous mandate. If that is what is expected of us while we are called on to reduce the force, that becomes challenging.

With regard to current developments, the force was initially deployed to a greater degree in the east, whereas there are currently more problems in the southern sector. Moving the force is becoming difficult, as the statement of unit requirements issued by the Office of Military Affairs and the memorandums of understanding (MOU) signed by Member States tend to confine the troops at my disposal to a greater degree in the east. Therefore, if I must move forces from the east to where there is a challenge, it means having to speak to the Office of Military Affairs and the Permanent Missions that must communicate with their capitals so as to obtain agreement allowing the forces to move. In terms of reaction-and-response time, that process takes time and causes delays. It becomes critical for the language of the statement of unit requirements and the MOUs to allow the Force Commander to use forces available to him in the part of the country in need and not in specified areas.

That represents a challenge in terms of command-and-control, policy-writing and giving direction to the Force Commander to use the forces at his disposal.

Aware that we are expected to deal with armed groups, especially the foreign armed groups within the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the way in which the MONUSCO mandates are written tends to provide for two forces. One is the Intervention Brigade, which is mandated to conduct targeted operations, whereas the rest of the Force, commonly known as the framework brigades, is expected to conduct only normal, and not targeted, operations. In terms of the cohesion of the force, that then becomes a challenge to command-and-control, which then makes the Force Commander's task a bit of a challenge to achieve what needs to be achieved.

With regard to the assets and capabilities that are available, the absence of infrastructure such as roads in the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes moving forces from one area to another very difficult. The way in which the mandate is written expects the force to be agile, flexible, versatile and mobile. In order to achieve that, the assets must be available in order for the mandate to be implemented. Unfortunately, such assets are often not available on the ground. In the Kasais, for example, I had to move a force from South Kivu to the Kasais. Because of the limited Mission support available, including the people required to provide the assets that were are not available on the ground, I was able to move only soldiers and their personal equipment; no main equipment could be moved. The soldiers have been on the ground now for the past three weeks, still awaiting the heavy-lift aircraft to move the vehicles. The Ilyushin 76, which is expected, is not yet on the ground, and it has been almost three weeks. That leaves the troops vulnerable on the ground. How then do we ensure that the forces and the support element, which falls under the civilian side of the operation, are responsive to the requirements of operations? That becomes a challenge when it comes to moving the forces to where they are expected to be.

Missions are expected to protect civilians and rightly so. A very good paper has been written on the three tiers of protection-of-civilians mandates: political strategy, physical protection and a conducive environment. The Mission is made up of civilian, police and military or force components. The challenge within the mission itself is to achieve a comprehensive integrated approach. Mission leadership must look at that and ensure that all components begin to play their

role, so as to avoid a situation where, when we reach the physical stage, it is already a bit too late. At the political level, we must ensure that we are able to, at least, prevent and anticipate events occurring.

According to a report published by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which is tasked with evaluating the implementation and results of the protection of civilians mandates,

> "the chain linking the intent of the Security Council to the actions of the Secretariat, troop- and police-contributing countries and peacekeeping missions themselves remains broken when it comes to the use of force" (*A/68/787, summary*).

The question of the use of force as mentioned by the report must be looked at by the United Nations because interpretations by some contingents on the ground are not necessarily the same. They tend to be eager to use force when it comes to self-defence, but the part of the report that speaks to the use of force for the defence of the mandate leads to different interpretations, which we need to look at.

In addition, command-and-control is a challenge because, once again, according to the same report, there is a

> "a de facto dual line of command involving mission leadership and troop-contributing countries that regulates the use of force by missions" (*ibid.*).

That means that, although they are not expressly stipulated, there are caveats that are not visible and come from the capitals. At times, forces are not eager to move forward and do what is expected of them, wishing to consider whether it is within their mandate or not, which is a challenge for MONUSCO. With regard to the issue of targeted operations by the Intervention Brigade, the Brigade becomes an escape clause for some of the framework brigades, which claim that a specific operation is not their job; it is the job of the Intervention Brigade. That is one of the areas that we need to look at.

I would like to point out that the principles of peacekeeping are still valid, but with regard to what happens on the ground, some of the armed groups are foreign, criminal and without any political agenda. In my view, if we speak of consent, that does not apply to them. If we speak of impartiality, that does not apply to them. If we speak of the use of force, where do we stand with them? Impartiality and all of the principles are valid, more so perhaps in peacekeeping. In peace enforcement, however, where no agreement has been signed, how do we address the principles of peacekeeping in today's conflict situation, in which we find ourselves dealing with criminal groups, as opposed to political groups trying to fight for freedom or independence from the host country?

It is a challenge for us to work with the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in politically charged areas such as the Kasais. Cooperating with them becomes difficult when they are also found to be committing human rights violations, but we are expected to support them. How then do we approach the situation when they are participating in such abuses? The credibility of the United Nations is at stake if it is seen to be working with them. In our experience, when we are present and work closely with them, their behaviour tends to change; they become more positive, but in areas in which we are not present, violations are committed and the environment then becomes very politically charged.

I thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to speak. I have tried to very briefly highlight some of the challenges that my colleagues in other areas might be experiencing.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Lieutenant General Mgwebi for his briefing. I recall that some of thoese subjects were referred to during the Council's visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last year and are certainly relevant to the Council's work.

I give the floor to Major General Menon.

Major General Menon: The challenges of Chapter VI peacekeeping have been acknowledged. Indeed, that acknowledgement goes as far back as Dag Hammarskjöld, when he referred to peacekeeping operations as belonging to "Chapter VI and a half" of the Charter. However, while we accept that challenges exist, it is important to state that many improvements have been made as peacekeeping operations have evolved, concepts have changed, and legal and operative guidelines have been transformed. They include, among others, An Agenda for Peace in 1992, the Supplement to an Agenda for Peace in 1995, the Brahimi Report in 2000, the Capstone Doctrine in 2008, the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations in 2015 (S/2015/446) and the work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

It is also notable that as challenges emerge and the very nature of Peacekeeping Operations evolves the core principles of peacekeeping have remained constant, particularly under Chapter VI of the Charter: consent, impartiality and the non-use of force, except in legitimate defence. Arguably, an expanded understanding of what constitutes a threat to peace, as defined in Article 39, has led to a fourth principle. Violence against civilians has reached levels of cruelty in conflict beyond comprehension. It includes ethnic cleansing, genocide, the rape of women and children, forced displacement, the use of chemical and other banned weapons and the crisis of refugees and the displaced. The fourth principle is that of protecting civil populations, human rights and the protection of humanitarian operations. The constant vigilance and zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse represent an unfortunate but necessary example of where even peacekeepers, seen as a beacon of hope in the most desperate of circumstances, can fall prey to the worst aspects of human nature.

Is it possible to determine the conditions required for successful peacekeeping? That has proved elusive, as history has taught us. It is my intention in this short statement to attempt to group the challenges of Chapter VI peacekeeping operations under three familiar strategic concepts: ends, ways and means. I will use my personal experience in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) — which I have the privilege and honour to lead in a difficult and challenging period — to highlight the challenges that exist. Finally, I will conclude by highlighting the importance of peacekeeping, beset as it is by challenges, and how we can move forward with that critical task.

It is important for the success of any peacekeeping operation to have a clear vision for the end — that is, the outcome. I do not necessarily refer to an "exit strategy" — although that is important — but, rather, to a clear idea of what constitutes success. That might be the observance of a ceasefire or the voluntary settlement of a dispute. However, even in traditional observation and monitoring missions, like UNDOF, the existence of an agreed settlement does not always provide the condition for success. Persistent belligerence or the non-commitment of the parties to a settlement after the initiation of a mission can represent a significant challenge. That is particularly the case when a shift occurs in the balance of power, or when a split takes place.

Clearly, it is essential that the parties to an agreement abide by that agreement. In UNDOF, the particular challenge has been the entry and presence of a third-party belligerent not party to any previous agreement, not bound to accept the established conventions and not committed to accepting the presence or role of the United Nations mission. That can significantly alter the nature of the original agreement and how it is subsequently implemented. The intentions of parties can also change, and the challenge is not always to try and renegotiate the original settlement — even where possible.

I believe that in order to overcome those particular challenges, the United Nations mission must have a clear and robust mandate, and it must also be flexible and adaptive. Any United Nations mission, particularly under Chapter VI, must have the ability to transform itself. It must be able to respond to challenges, adapt its disposition, tailor its forces and alter its deployments and focus as the situation requires. That enables the mission to respond to its environment without becoming ineffective because the situation has changed. That has proven to be a significant challenge for UNDOF as we transition for the third time in four years with the return to operations in Camp Faouar and on the Bravo side in Syria. However, with a clear vision, that transformation is possible. The challenge for Chapter VI operations is to ensure that the United Nations as an organization is flexible and agile enough to change as the mission situation does.

How the mission achieves that end is through various ways — strategic, operational and tactical. And the ways can change rapidly. The political, security and operational situations are all influenced by the parties — legitimate or otherwise. As we have experienced directly in UNDOF, third parties become influential and change the dynamic. The third parties cannot be ignored, because they also have aims and agendas that influence and shape the situation. Although in our specific example the third parties are not party to the original agreement, they are stakeholders nevertheless. They also come from the civil population, which they seek to control and influence, whereas the civilian population requires protection, security, humanitarian and human rights assistance.

The challenge for Chapter VI missions is that the same ways will not always be suitable or possible. Just because something was acceptable, successful or agreeable in the past does not mean that it is the right course of action now. For 40 years UNDOF had a

particular way of operating, with specific parameters agreed by Israel and Syria, the parties to the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces. Those ways were also agreeable and suitable to the other key factor in peacekeeping operations — the troop-contributing countries. That way of operating is no longer suitable — even if it were possible. UNDOF is currently changing the ways in which it operates. It must — because the political, security and operational situations have all changed. The specific challenge for Chapter VI peacekeeping is to ensure that the new ways are supported and resourced. The United Nations as an organization must be open to change, open to new ways of doing things, not be afraid to chart a new course, even though the past 40 years have reflected a successful way of achieving the requirements. The Organization must be willing, and able, to learn — and quickly, as the situation demands it.

No mission can operate without the means to do so — that is, the capability. Capability development is more than just equipment. It is the right equipment, in the right place, at the right time, with the right people qualified and capable of operating it. That requirement covers a multitude of issues for Chapter VI peacekeeping operations: troop-contributing country support; contingent-owned equipment suitable for deployment; the rotation of troops who have received the correct environment-specific training in their home nations — including with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse, cultural awareness and the rules of engagement; and the complete absence of national caveats that present commanders with unacceptable situations on the ground.

In UNDOF, troop-contributing countries have deployed some contingents without the required equipment. The support from the deployed troop-contributing countries has been superb in trying to match the mission's requirement. Two countries have started to develop the specific capability for the mission that they do not possess in their home countries. That is an admirable commitment, and I commend their support. I could not achieve my mandate without it. However, that also presents difficulties. The newly developed capability has not been fully developed. The experience is not present on deployment and must be developed in an environment that is often not suitable for on-the-job training. The challenge for the Organization is to match troop-contributing-countrys' capabilities with the requirement. In moving to achieve new ends and ways, the means available from troop-contributing countries are lacking.

UNDOF is attempting to turn a traditional light infantry force into one with armoured protection and firepower as critical force-protection measures. However, in order to meet the demand, countries without that capability have to develop it, rather than countries with experienced capability providing it. This mismatch of capability versus willingness must be addressed.

Inter-mission cooperation is also required if Chapter VI mission operations are to succeed. A good example of such inter-mission cooperation and coordination, including with a State that is not covered by the mandate, is how UNDOF is required to conduct its operational and administrative moves through Lebanon with full cooperation, assistance and facilitation by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the Lebanese authorities, because of the absence of a crossing across the ceasefire line between Israel and Syria.

UNDOF is an excellent example of the challenges facing Chapter VI peacekeeping. For 40 years, it was a classic Chapter VI mission, observing and reporting on an agreement between two sovereign States attempting to avoid war. For 40 years, a specific way of operating, with minimum means, was sufficient to achieve the desired end. Since 2011, however, this has utterly changed. UNDOF and the United Nations are challenged on a daily basis in transforming and adapting to a new reality. The ends, ways and means are all changing, and while this change is happening, UNDOF is required to achieve its mandate however it can — limited initially, but now moving back into Syria and the areas from which it withdrew in 2014. But UNDOF will not, and cannot, go back to how it operated for 40 years. The question posed to UNDOF has not changed, but the answers required have, and this is the ultimate challenge.

The solution required is an organization that is flexible and agile enough to change as the mission situation does. The organization must be willing and able to learn, and learn quickly. It should be able to respond quickly to changing situations, including the allotment of an additional budget if required. And troop-contributing countries, whose support is so critical to peacekeeping, must be willing to match capability to requirement, rather than providing support based on national interest.

Peacekeeping, in any guise, is challenging. However, we should not be looking for the perfect solution, simply the best possible one. At the start of this address I referred to Dag Hammarskjöld, who identified the challenge for the United Nations early by referring to "Chapter VI and a half" of the Charter. It is perhaps fitting to end with him also.

Chapter VI peacekeeping is challenging, but so is anything worthwhile. And peacekeeping is not just worthwhile, it is essential. As Hammarskjöld said, the United Nations was not created to take humankind into paradise, but, rather, to save humankind from hell. Peacekeepers all over the world try to meet this challenge on a daily basis. Some of our peacekeepers die trying to achieve it, as we have so tragically seen only recently in the Central African Republic and yesterday in Chad. Our challenge is to ensure that the ends, ways and means required are available so as to give our peacekeepers the best possible chance of success.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank General Menon for his comments.

I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Keïta.

Lieutenant General Keïta (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to warmly thank the Council for providing me with this opportunity to present to it, in 10 minutes or so, my Mission's views on an issue that is of such crucial importance to the Council, namely, robust peacekeeping.

I am fully aware of the difficulty and delicate nature of this task, as the Security Council itself established this concept and has been following its difficult implementation for several years now. Thus I am grateful for your understanding regarding this issue and would like to touch upon, if I may, certain aspects that will in all likelihood lead to the appropriate reactions on the part of the Council.

For several years now, we have been seeing major changes in peacekeeping missions, which are facing increasingly complex and chaotic conflicts characterized by rising levels of violence and a strengthened presence by uncontrollable warring parties. The tragedies of Srebrenica and Rwanda are still fresh in our minds, as are those in South Sudan, Somalia and Mali, which are a challenge to us all.

In many ways, the move towards more robust mandates was inevitable. An example is the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2013, where a Force Intervention Brigade was established within the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Situated somewhere between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, the main goal of this new approach, which combines strong political intentionality with aggressive military action, is to give the peacekeeping missions concerned the necessary operational credibility, especially with respect to spoilers. This would allow them to better protect civilian populations and ensure that the discharge of their mandates; the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and the political process are not jeopardized.

However, it is clear that this desire for robust action, free from artificial constraints of neutrality and determined to use force as and when necessary, has fallen short of expectations.

Here I should like to comment briefly on factors that I believe have hampered the effective implementation of the concept of a robust mandate. I will also talk about various pathways for discussion as to how we could make the appropriate adjustments.

It is our humble view that a robust mandate should manifest at all levels, from the Security Council to the troops on the ground, the armed branch of the system. Indeed, I think that the concept of a robust mandate has suffered from a deficiency in the original concept, namely, that the intent to conduct robust and aggressive, even offensive, action has seemed to take the form of only operational and tactical action.

But logically, this desire for firm action should have been translated equally into all of the dimensions — political, legal and administrative — of the actions of the impacted missions. In fact, no military action, vigorous though it might be, can make up for the shortcomings I have just mentioned if it is not carried out in support of an appropriately firm policy, established by an organized structure and operating on the basis of tailored rules and procedures.

In fact, there is a fundamental contradiction between, on the one hand, the declared intent to take a more offensive stance on the basis of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and, on the other, an implementation framework that remains under Chapter VI, which, as the Council is aware, involves a role that is far less ambitious, namely, that of referee between warring parties.

For the concept of a robust mandate to actually lead to vigorous and decisive action, the doctrine and structure of peacekeeping missions, their focus and the political posture underlying them, as well as the resources allocated to them, all must transcend traditional peacekeeping methods. We therefore need to finalize this paradigm shift and support this intent to act with firmness through the necessary psychological, organizational and doctrinal changes.

Along the same lines, there is a need to strengthen, make credible and streamline this approach by providing the resources necessary to ensure that the declared goals can be effectively met. These changes should also lead to Member States, in particular troop-contributing countries, taking a resolute stance to protect suffering civilian populations and accepting the political and operational risks inherent to the application of robust mandates.

The Security Council should demonstrate its resolve through ongoing political support for missions, which could also lead to the adoption of sanctions regimes that are more tailored and aggressive with respect to individuals and organizations acting as spoilers in the context of the peace process. This is the same type of strong message that has to come from regional organizations. Rightly or wrongly, the perception is, unfortunately, that some troop-contributing countries are reluctant and that the Security Council is sometimes divided because of differing strategic interests. Those differences are even greater at the level of regional organizations.

We also have to rethink the internal structure of peacekeeping missions if we are to give them the resilience and decision-making agility needed to implement such robust mandates effectively. For that, we should give particular emphasis to reducing red tape and administrative regulations, which lead to slowdowns, a lack of cohesiveness and serious handicaps. I should underscore that the regulations that we are dealing with end up producing logistical support that is not well adapted to robust operations, owing to the slowness of the processes and severe restrictions on the operational use of essential force multipliers such as military aviation and engineering and transport units. And it is impossible to conduct effective operations under such administrative regulations.

Similarly, the principles of exemptions and flexibility for contingents in the memorandums of understanding and statements of unit requirements should be reviewed with a critical eye, because they are two of the most limiting factors for the force's effectiveness. They are, frankly, incompatible with the intensity of engagement, capacity for rapid reaction, unexpected changes in posture and vigorous supported action, which are intrinsic to robust operations. Lastly, within missions, the progress that must be made is needed at several levels. The forces themselves, which are at the core of the drive for robust action, should reflect the necessary reality and consistency in their numbers, their equipment, their operational preparedness and their morale. Those parameters should be thoroughly tested not just before deployment but also during their entire deployment. Units that do not meet the required criteria should be withdrawn, and Force Commanders should be able to demand that they be repatriated if they are clearly incapable of the necessary operational effectiveness.

The rules of engagement should also be revisited in order to enable strong offensive operations so as to be able to properly protect populations and ensure that missions have the freedom to manoeuvre and support their actions. That does not mean giving missions licence to abuse force but rather helping them make better use of the weapons they have. While I am aware that some changes are under way, we will not be able to realize them fully until we mobilize the fundamental and rapid change of mindset that I mentioned earlier. Nonetheless, I believe that is the price we must pay in order to ensure that the desire for decisive action expressed in our robust mandates can lead to tangible results on the ground.

If I may, I would like to refer to our mission, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which has, to some extent, been able to embody such a robust approach to peacekeeping by preventing the slaughter of the civilian population in a number of areas and in particular by defending the town of Bambari against a coalition of armed groups. That operation succeeded because we bent various administrative rules, challenged some limiting agreements with troops and changed morale where the use of force was involved. Our efforts also benefited from the unequivocal support of the Security Council, which took targeted measures at the right time. MINUSCA is an example, even if an imperfect one, of robust peacekeeping, although we recognize that

we could have done better without various ongoing complications. If I may, while apologizing for perhaps bypassing some of the rules, I would like to say that I believe MINUSCA is on the road to success. Despite that, it still needs support, and I would like to solemnly request that the Council continue to give it robust support.

In conclusion, I believe that getting the two parts aligned — on the one hand, the robust mandates and on the other, the appropriate bodies, means and procedures — is crucial to bridging the gap between the expectations of the parties involved and missions' actual capacities. Only well-equipped and well-trained troops, working in an environment free of bureaucratic red tape and supported by firm policy positions at every level — the Security Council, regional organizations and partners — can enable us to mobilize effectively and decisively. I know that not all of the thoughts that I have shared with the Council can help to solve the problem definitively and in the short term, but they accord with the major conclusions of the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (see S/2015/446). I hope that they will at least help to emphasize the urgency of speeding up the consolidation of the concept of robust mandates in order to ensure that effective peacekeeping operations will enable us to save thousands of human lives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Lieutenant General Keïta for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Major General Uba.

Major General Uba: I am Major General Salihu Zaway Uba, Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). It is a privilege for me to address the Security Council and to share some of my thoughts on our experiences and the challenges brought on by UNMIL's drawdown, based on my experience in the United Nations Mission in Liberia, established pursuant to resolution 1509 (2003). After 14 years of back-to-back civil wars in Liberia, UNMIL was established with a robust force of about 15,250 personnel, including formed police units, United Nations Police (UNPOL) officers and a significant civilian component, whose job, among other things, was to assist with the peace processes and support security-sector reform. UNMIL has worked assiduously ever since in accordance with the various relevant Security Council resolutions as they were adopted. The first post-conflict democratic elections in Liberia were held in 2005, following the establishment of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and a programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In 2006, in the wake of those successful elections, UNMIL began a phased drawdown of the Mission and by 2010 had adjusted troop strengths down to 7,952, while the police totals, including the formed police units, were reduced to about 1,375.

As a mission in transition, the Mission handed over all security responsibilities to the Government of Liberia in June 2016 and completed its drawdown in February of this year, leaving only a residual force capacity of 434 made up of a Nigerian company of 230 troops and a Ukrainian aviation unit and a Pakistani Level II hospital manned by 105 and 69 troops, respectively. The force headquarters is compact, consisting of 15 staff officers and 15 military observers, who are double-hatted and generally carry out several headquarters functions. The residual UNPOL contingent is made up of two formed police units at an authorized strength of 260, and 50 individual police officers, for a total of 310, while the civilian component consists of 783 international, national and United Nations volunteer staff. The Government of Liberia has fully taken over all security responsibilities and has developed a concrete plan and timelines for the third post-conflict general election, scheduled for 10 October.

It is a well-known fact that, as countries emerge from conflict, they undergo critical socioeconomic, development and political changes in which United Nations missions are expected to adapt to encourage depth of reconciliation and peace consolidation within the national polity. While United Nations transitions can be as diverse as the contexts in which they take place and are heavily influenced by decisions made by host Governments, transitions must be a response to significant changes in a country's political, security and socioeconomic development. The UNMIL transition was planned to ensure continuity in the development and security agendas of Liberia with the goal of consolidating a peace dividend and ensuring the nation focuses more on building a holistic security system for the society.

My briefing will focus on drawdown considerations and associated issues, the current UNMIL configuration and mandate and proffer some recommendations in considering the drawdown and related issues.

Guidance for considerations when planning and managing the transition of United Nations missions

scheduled for a significant drawdown, withdrawal or closure are many and varied. The drawdown of UNMIL considered several planning preparations and guidance from United Nations Headquarters and the Mission. These included early and integrated transition planning, which was firmly rooted in the minds of the leadership, other staff members and the host nation. The planning guidance mapped clear objectives of the drawdown and indicated some benchmarks and timelines just as the Mission integrated transition issues into an all-encompassing planning tool. A planning officer was appointed and dedicated for such tasks while intermission cooperation with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire was intensified to cover gaps in the transition planning process and to assist in a potential security setback in Liberia by using the quick reaction force where possible.

During the transition phases, UNMIL inculcated and engaged the views of the Government of Liberia, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and other international partners in the entire process of the drawdown. The UNMIL good offices interfaced and informed on the timing, scope and expected benchmarks of the transition. The iniative of UNMIL to engage in regular dialogues and series of engagements with all stakeholders assisted the Government of Liberia in buying into the transition agenda seamlessly. Consultations continued with all, including civil society groups, opposition parties, women and minority representatives in Liberia. While UNMIL was interested in keeping the transition on track to achieve its objective timelines, the Government of Liberia was similarly made to see the transition as its own product in which failure could have a serious backlash on the Government and the people of Liberia.

Managing the logistics support in the transition was Herculean to UNMIL, as Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese engineers were earmarked for repatriation in the process of the drawdown. Engineering support for the maintenance of UNMIL main supply routes became unfeasible due to heavy rain and poor road conditions in Liberia. UNMIL resorted to the planned use of air to replenish most critical supplies in some key locations in the field. Patrols for early-warning and mapping exercises to assess and report the situation as it truly was, particularly in the hinterland, became conditional on friendly weather in the areas. Expired ammunition certification and disposal and camp maintenance became an issue owing to a lack of qualified workforce. UNMIL had to resort to borrowing experienced ammunition technical officers from sister missions for the certification of ammunition before troops' rotations.

Consistent with drawdown requirements, UNMIL engaged national staff capacity to function in some critically vacated areas, while the need to keep qualified international staff in support of the Mission to the end was similarly appraised and balanced. UNMIL continued to undertake staffing needs assessments to determine the skills required throughout the drawdown to liquidation phase with a view to meeting up critical staffing gaps. Capacity-building and the capability of the Liberian National Police and the Armed Forces of Liberia, including other security apparatuses, have been mixed. There are about 2,000 trained Armed Forces of Liberia members, including engineering, band and military police platoons respectively, while the Liberian National Police is about 5,000 in strength and mainly domiciled in Monrovia. Equipment and logistical sustenance have been daunting for the security services, particularly when deployed outside Monrovia. UNMIL and other international community members have been doing the best they could to provide mentorship, training and logistics to the security agencies and the Armed Forces of Liberia as the case may be.

UNMIL transition leading to phased drawdown of military forces started early following the first successful post-conflict elections in Liberia. Thereafter, UNMIL continued to right-size its personnel, coordinate its activities and collaborate with other international partners for coherence between peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development necessary for post-conflict peace and stability. The Mission drew up a drawdown plan and continued to implement the plan by closing its field offices systematically and reducing its footprints in several endeavours. The consequent handover of security responsibilities to the Government of Liberia in June 2016, the establishment of the transition plan and benchmarks and the visit of the Strategic Assessment Team in September 2016 were all part of the drawdown process of UNMIL.

The transition leading to liquidation in June 2018 was supported by resolution 2333 (2016) and a budget procedure is ongoing in support of such endeavours. Processes were carefully planned in line with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support Liquidation Manual, aptly communicated to stakeholders and politically supported by the

Government of Liberia. The review of the strategic asessment team report and the subsequent release of resolution 2333 (2016) all underscored the retention of UNMIL's residual capacity through Liberia's general elections in 2017. That resolution came up with a mandate that includes the protection of civilians; support for reform of justice and security institutions by assisting the Government of Liberia in developing the leadership, internal management, professionalization and accountability mechanisms of the Liberian National Police, with a particular focus on elections security; the promotion, protection and monitoring of human rights activities in Liberia; the protection of United Nations personnel, installations and equipment and the ensuring of security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel; and support for the capabilities of the Government of Liberia to meet urgent gaps in the 2017 general elections.

UNMIL has consistently undertaken a proactive approach to ensure all camps that are closing down comply with environmental sustainability standards. All measures necessary are taken regularly to inform and sensitize Liberians and members of the international community on the transition timelines. Resolution 2333 (2016) is the final resolution on UNMIL, as it sets out a final closure timetable for the Mission.

In the broadest sense, a multidimensional mission's transition and drawdown indicate significant changes in its mandated presence in a country. While transition may include start-up, reconfiguration and drawdown or withdrawal of a United Nations mission, the need for early and integrated transition planning needs to be firmly in the minds of the mission leadership. Planning considerations addressing the transition phase must be transparent and flexible and be regularly reviewed and adjusted to ensure their practical relevance.

A successful United Nations transition will require broad national buy-in and ownership, strong support of the Security Council, as well as the major donors and regional partners. Planning guidance should therefore involve all relevant partners and engage in high-level consultations at the United Nations Headquarters and in broader consultation with national actors, including key political players, minority group representatives, civil-society groups, women leaders and the media. The strategic assessment of field missions must take into account the need to balance the security forces required to secure United Nations assets and personnel in the midst of drawdown and closure of missions.

I would like to make a few recommendations. Planning considerations addressing the transition phase should be made clear and flexible. The drawdown of missions should be planned using a graduated approach, keeping in mind the need to retain a force of reasonable strength and adequate manpower until a mission is liquidated. Headquarters should adopt strategies that will reduce the negative impact of the drawdown and the withdrawal of mission assets in the field. A mission-liquidation strategy should be carefully planned, communicated and politically supported by both the mission leadership and the host nation. Missions should undertake early staffing-needs assessment to determine the skills required throughout the liquidation phase. Missions should set processes for the building of national capacities early in the life cycle of a mission. Information and records management should be given priority at the outset of a mission — not only during the liquidation phase. Documentation should include lessons-learned exercises and after-action reviews of transition processes and mandate implementation — and the challenges thereto — undertaken by the outgoing mission and the lead department.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Major General Uba for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): After listening to our briefers during this most important exercise, I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his introductory remarks and, in particular, for bringing us together around this table. I would also like to thank the Force Commanders for sharing with the Security Council their visions of an effective implementation of the peacekeeping operations mandates for which they are responsible and which have been assigned to them by the Council. It has also been an opportunity for them to give us feedback on what they have experienced day to day in various theatres of operation.

This event was more than necessary as it takes place in the context of the review in which we are seeking to reorienting efforts aimed at adapting peacekeeping operations and their mandates to the current realities. We believe that there is nothing more useful for the Council than to interact with force commanders and peacekeeping operations in order to better take into account the challenges and specificities of each theatre. Let us recall that each operation is *sui generis*.

This meeting is of particular importance to my delegation because my country, Senegal, is present in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), with troops totalling 1,513 men, a task force consisting of an infantry battalion and a tactical helicopter unit. In the second half of 2017, the number of troops deployed will increase to 2,253. The helicopter unit will be called upon to intervene in Liberia should the need arise.

We would once again reiterate our gratitude to the Force Commanders for the outstanding work they have accomplished, often in complex and difficult situations, in carrying out Security Council mandates. In particular, I commend the Force Commanders of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MINUSCA, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for their important briefings, which highlighted the political, security and strategic challenges our missions are facing. The effective implementation of these challenges will undoubtedly depend on the effectiveness of our missions and the image and credibility of the Organization.

Having said that, I would now like to ask the Force Commanders a few questions.

With regard to MINUSCA, I would first like to express our deepest condolences to Lieutenant General Balla Keïta for the loss of Cambodian and Moroccan soldiers during clashes over the last few weeks. I would also like bear witness to our satisfaction for the professionalism General Keïta has demonstrated in carrying out his mission. In addition, I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the two Chadian soldiers who fell in Mali under the flag of MINUSMA. We therefore express our heartfelt condolences to Chad.

Lieutenant General Keïta mentioned earlier that attack helicopters were used for the first time to slow down the advance of armed groups. My first question is what led him to take this type of decision. This decision, I would remind the Council, was most courageous as it was unprecedented. Secondly, I would like to know whether he thinks that the use of these types of air assets can play a decisive role in carrying out mandates, particularly in the context of the protection of civilians.

With respect to UNMIL, the Senegalese contingent was called upon to intervene in Liberia while it was serving in MINUSMA, that is to say, in Mali. The experience we saw in the decommissioning of assets in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and their transfer to MINUSCA showed that this type of operation requires good planning and coordination between the two missions and the Secretariat. I would like to ask Major General Salihu Zaway Uba what arrangements have been made for the reception and operational integration of this contingent.

With regard to transitions and the exit strategies for missions, we have seen that this is a most difficult endeavour, requiring early planning that takes due account of the conditions on the ground and the objectives to be attained to close a peacekeeping operation and see to the needs of making the transition to an integrated peacebuilding office or other arrangement. Seen in this light, the transition in Liberia, which will follow a peacebuilding plan developed as part of the planned drawdown of UNMIL, could become a benchmark for other missions to strive to match. I would like to hear the views of the UNMIL Force Commander on his experience in planning and strategy with respect to the orderly withdrawal and exit of UNMIL without jeopardizing efforts to achieve the long-term goals of peace and stability.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I would like to take this opportunity to thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and the Force Commanders for their briefings. They are a valuable contribution to the current debate on peacekeeping reform.

In a world where global security challenges are increasing dramatically, we strongly believe that peacekeeping should remain a crucial tool for the maintenance of peace and security. We strongly believe in it, we are largest contributor of troops among the Western European and other States Group, and we are continuing our efforts in this area. Yet resources are limited and should be utilized a cost-effective way. We need a more holistic approach, and peace operations should be defined in a broader context of prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, in a sort of peace continuum where the quest for political solutions must be our primary goal.

Peacekeeping missions should therefore be regularly reviewed to assess their effectiveness, adherence to their mandate and the need for adjustments to address

evolving situations on the ground. This would make it possible to identify and thereby fill in potential gaps. In that context, it is of paramount importance to receive briefings and evaluations from Force Commanders, and to have in-depth discussions on possible options.

After listening to the Force Commander today, we are concerned about the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We agree with Lieutenant General Mbuyiselo Mgwebi that the threat flaring up all over the country requires an even-more mobile United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to ensure the protection of civilians in several provinces and to assist the Government in the run-up to the election. In that context, flexibility is key. We are confident that the last renewal of the mandate, which also anticipates using troops and assets from other missions in the region, will provide sufficient flexibility, and that in coming months MONUSCO will be able to improve its performance, thereby enhancing its mobility and effectiveness.

The situation in the Central African Republic is another example of the different challenges and asymmetric threats peace missions face today. We commend the robust posture of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, which prevented armed groups in the Central African Republic from expanding their control over larger swathes of the country. However, it is very unfortunate that in recent weeks, the Mission has been the target of a deadly attack that resulted in the death of five peacekeepers and the wounding of several others. We reiterate our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims in Cambodia and Morocco. I too would like to take this opportunity to express my condolences to the recent victims in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

On a positive note, I would like to underline the support of the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, which is making crucial contributions to restoring national harmony. The involvement of regional actors and the role of regional and subregional organizations is key to establishing an effective and successful political process. In that regard, the European Union can have a major role in complementing the on-the-ground efforts of other relevant players.

We also believe that the Mutual Engagement Framework between the international community and the Central African Republic is proving to be a valuable instrument for cooperation and a clear example of how the Mission's mandate can be linked to the political process so as to enhance the local ownership of the stabilization process and to prevent dependence on the Mission.

As for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), its area of operations is quite risky and the presence of non-State actors can lead to unintended escalations arising from accidental clashes between the parties. In the interest of preventive diplomacy, it is advisable for UNDOF to strengthen its coordination mechanisms with the parties, following the same-region model of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and its remarkable tripartite coordination mechanism. The mechanism has shown how important the coordination of the liaison function can be for a peacekeeping mission to maintain stability, defuse tension and prevent the escalation of incidents.

With regard to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), after almost 14 years everyone recognizes the success story behind that peacekeeping operation. Over the years, the presence of the United Nations in that country helped rebuild what a devastating civil war had destroyed, leading the Liberian authorities to assume full responsibility for their own security. At the same time, the UNMIL case exemplifies a flexible and modern approach to peacekeeping, based on a gradual methodology in managing troops and police forces in a country, on an appropriate integration mechanism with the other regional peacekeeping operations, as well as on coordination with the peacebuilding dimension — in order to ensure an orderly withdrawal in March 2018. An early disengagement could be counterproductive. Thus, strategic patience must be at the core of our evaluation.

Finally, I want to thank the presidency for the opportunity to listen to the Force Commanders and to engage with them in a fruitful dialogue. We stand ready to continue to discuss peace missions with troop- and police-contributing countries, with the common aim of having smarter peacekeeping missions that are as effective and accountable as possible.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to have this interactive discussion with the Force Commanders. Many thanks to them and to Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his briefing.

Tomorrow is the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, so I want to begin by paying tribute to all of our Force Commanders for their bravery, service and leadership, and to all of the men and women who work for them in support of United Nations peace operations around the world. It is United Nations peacekeepers who turn the words of the Security Council into action in the real world. They are literally on the front line of bringing peace and security to the world, serving in some of the most difficult environments imaginable, and sometimes they have to put their own lives on the line in order to protect the world's most vulnerable people. Sadly, that dedication and determination on occasion requires them to pay the ultimate price as two peacekeepers from Chad did yesterday in Mali. We pay tribute to their courage and to their ultimate sacrifice.

We should be proud of the service of all United Nations peacekeepers. The employment of peacekeepers is truly one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations over its 72 years of history but, like the rest of the United Nations, it needs to reform. It needs to progress with the times and it needs to be modernized. There is always more that can be done to make United Nations peacekeeping more efficient and more effective — better mission planning, more pledges of troops and capabilities, and stronger mission performance, not just in driving down all of the sexual exploitation and abuse allegations down to zero, but in other aspects of performance as well.

This afternoon we have heard of several of the challenges facing peacekeeping missions, particular those operating in high-threat environments. We heard how missions are changing the ways, means and ends of their operations. My overarching question is whether that change is happening fast enough to keep up with global changes. I would like to illustrate that question with three more specific concerns.

My first point is about the use of intelligence and technology in peacekeeping.There has been much debate on that topic here in New York. Member States have recently called for greater use of peacekeeping intelligence in missions, and it is a part of what we would consider to be the necessary modernization of peacekeeping. It would be interesting to hear the views of the Force Commanders on that issue and on what progress has been made in improving situational awareness in their missions.

My second point has to do with the role of women in peacekeeping. At the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in London, many Member States committed to increasing the number of women in peacekeeping, specifically by deploying more female military observers. Collectively, we are a long way from meeting that commitment of doubling the number of women in peacekeeping by 2020, and it would be very helpful to hear suggestions from Force Commanders about actions that could be taken to meet that very ambitious target.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I would ask a series of questions on how we can make sure that missions are truly becoming more efficient and effective. How can we get the right people with the right skills, the right equipment and the right training in the right place at the right time? We have been doing a lot through the series of peacekeeping ministerials and through force generation conferences in order to increase the available pool of peacekeepers and thus, the overall capabilities available. What difference do the Force Commanders believe that those efforts have made so far? Are we collectively generating the capabilities that they need? Are the peacekeepers reaching them more quickly than before?

I also have a question for the Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in response to his remarks. What is he doing as Force Commander and what are his colleagues doing to ensure that all of the troops under their command have the same understanding of the basic principles of peacekeeping, including on when the use of force is necessary and appropriate?

Similarly, it was interesting to hear the points of the commander of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic on how too much red tape is slowing down decisions and making it harder for the more strategic and robust approach to peacekeeping to be effective. I would like to hear other ideas as to how we can get rid of that red tape more broadly, and finally, what we all can further do to continually drive up both the performance of individual missions and the accountability between each mission and the Security Council.

In conclusion, I would like to underline, once again, that United Nations peacekeeping, in our view, is the jewel in the crown of the Organization. It is the unique

selling point of the United Nations, and I encourage everyone involved, including all of us, to keep up the level of ambition, to ensure that the pace of change is fast enough to allow peacekeeping to be modernized and do its job in the twenty-first century ever more effectively and efficiently so that it can really protect the people who need that protection.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): I, too, should like to begin by thanking today's briefers for their very insightful remarks. Like Matthew Rycroft, I would like to begin my statement by paying tribute to the brave men and women serving with the United Nations, who, on a daily basis, place themselves in some of the most difficult and dangerous contexts in the world. We appreciate their commitment, which over the past 70 years has saved countless lives.

Today's briefing provides a timely opportunity to discuss operational challenges across the peacekeeping realm, not least in the light of the ongoing review of the United Nations peace and security architecture. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to implementing a more holistic approach to sustaining peace. That work deserves our full support. We encourage the Secretary-General to be bold in his recommendations.

The broader concept of the primacy of politics is key to ensuring effective peace operations and the successful implementation of peacekeeping mandates. As sustainable peace can only be delivered based on political solutions, political strategies must be built across all pillars of the United Nations system. Military components represent a crucial part of those integrated strategies. Clear and measurable objectives accompanied by benchmarks for follow-up and reporting back to the Security Council should provide those integrated missions planning and leadership.

Today's briefings highlighted the diverse challenges facing various missions and also indicated the need for a context-specific approach to the configuration of all missions. That work needs to be supported with high-quality conflict analysis, including through intelligence and analysis jointly prepared by the whole of the United Nations system.

Experience shows that agreeing more realistic, context-tailored and flexible mandates will increase the potential for successful outcomes. Within mandates, tasks need to be prioritized, sequenced and adjusted over time, and we encourage efforts to enhance the flexibility and the ability to correct course, including through frank input from across the system and enhanced capacity to engage with local communities. To achieve that, we also need to empower the field, including by simplifying administrative procedures and achieving greater delegation of authority, but also by ensuring that the highest calibre candidates be appointed to lead those United Nations missions in the field.

Support for capacity-building needs and better reporting of caveats by troop- and police-contributing countries are essential. All peacekeepers, as well as contributing countries, need to be properly prepared, trained and equipped so as to meet the challenges that they will face in the field.

There is an inherent link between security and human rights. Human-rights components should be standard in peace operations so as to enhance their quality and effectiveness, not least in the promotion of the rights of and protection of civilians. The protection and promotion of human rights must constitute a whole-of-mission approach. Furthermore, when a gender perspective is implemented from the beginning of a mission, it leads to more operational effectiveness, better situational awareness and more security for our troops. All missions should continually report on how gender considerations are included across operations.

Let me turn now to some of the points raised by today's briefers.

First, with regard to drawdowns, the type of cross-pillar, political strategies, which were mentioned, should lay the groundwork for successful drawdowns. Experience shows us that there is room for improvement in how the United Nations deals with transitions. Exit strategies and transitional phases of peacekeeping operations need to be analysed and planned at an early stage in cooperation with all relevant actors. Realistic expectations of what can be achieved in the immediate aftermath of the drawdown must be coupled with clear commitments from the Government to further key structural reforms. We wonder, for example, if, through the United Nations country team, the United Nations is equipped and resourced to deliver on the ambitious peacebuilding plan in Liberia. As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, we feel that the Commission has an important role to play in monitoring and following up so that the international community can provide the support needed to deliver

that peacebuilding plan at this important transition phase for Liberia.

Secondly, if peacekeeping is to be robust, mandates must be matched with adequate capabilities for missions to fulfil their objectives. A robust stance will also require flexibility to adjust to changed circumstances. Helicopters, intelligence and quick reaction forces, as well as the proper training of troops, are key in that regard. In addition to military and police resources, that is an area in which human rights expertise is essential. We need to consider short-term objectives in relation to longer-term consequences when developing strategies for the protection of civilians. Local engagement is also essential for understanding conflict dynamics and allowing the mission to carefully weigh its options.

In conclusion, peacekeeping is an essential, unique and, according to many assessments, successful instrument within the United Nations peace and security toolbox. It is nonetheless essential that it evolves in response to the changing nature of the challenges that we face today. In supporting that evolution, we must not waiver in our commitment to those who serve and those whom we seek to protect.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Lieutenant General Mgwebi, Major General Menon, Lieutenant General Keïta and Major General Uba for their briefings this afternoon and for the commitment that they have shown to the ideals of the Organization. We too are very grateful for what they do every day in their service to the United Nations to protect the world's most vulnerable people, and we know that they and the troops under their command are on the front lines.

Some of those troops, as has been noted by many colleagues, have made the ultimate sacrifice, and I would like to extend our deepest condolences with respect to the deaths of peacekeepers this month in both the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, as well as those of the nine other peacekeepers this past year.

We recognize that leading a United Nations peacekeeping force is extremely challenging. The Force Commanders are working in increasingly dangerous environments and, at times, with the half-hearted commitment of political leaders to the agreements that led to their deployment. Security Council mandates have also become more complex and, admittedly in some places, confusing. It is therefore very important for us to hear today their ground-level insights to the challenges, which they face.

One challenge of particular concern to us is that of performance and accountability. As Force Commanders, they have the most direct influence over our peacekeepers in the field, and we count on their leadership as the first line of accountability for the conduct of the troops and police under their command. That is particularly true with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse. All of us condemn such abuse and call for zero tolerance, but they are the ones who can most directly ensure that those crimes do not happen on their watch. They also have the clearest view of peacekeeper performance. If they encounter performance issues, we need to know. If they help us identify problems, we can help them address them. It is much better for the Security Council to learn of issues early from our own peacekeeping mission leaders, than to have to deal with the consequences later. Standardized, objective performance reporting will help us greatly and we encourage mission leaders to make effective use of the existing systems to track and document performance and to embrace those now in development.

I would now like to touch on individual briefings.

First, I thank Lieutenant General Keïta for his briefing on robust peacekeeping. We commend him for the demonstrated willingness of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to take risks and act decisively against armed groups; its support to the Government; its proactive protection of civilians and for the provision of security in the Central African Republic. MINUSCA's robust and proactive response in Bombari serves as an example for all peacekeeping missions. However, the threats to MINUSCA in the Central African Republic are quickly evolving and require an immediate response. I would therefore like to ask: Can it be said that there is enough flexibility to determine operational requirements within the mandate?

This comment is for Lieutenant General Mgwebi. In the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), as with all peacekeeping missions, we must look at ways to improve the performance of the Mission, including by unlocking the Force Intervention Brigade so that it

can be more mobile, and by building the capacity of the troop- and police-contributing countries serving in them. Ensuring accountability for poor performance, conduct and discipline remains a priority for the United States. With regard to MONUSCO, Lieutenant General Mgwebi mentioned the difficulty of moving troops quickly, given national caveats. What can we do to ensure that action can be taken quickly when the situation demands it?

This comment is for Major General Menon. We know that the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has faced a number of serious challenges since its creation in 1974. In recent years, those challenges have arisen from the fact that its area of operations has changed so dramatically. The mission has patiently worked with the parties and garnered the support of the Council for major upgrades to its equipment and force protection, as well as to plan for a successful return to the Syrian side of the area of separation. We commend the General's work to execute that difficult strategy and to plan so diligently for UNDOF's future. Could we have additional details on how force protection concerns are being addressed, while ensuring that the mission fulfils its mandate? Are there particular technologies that could be useful in the unique environment in which the mission operates?

With regard to the briefing by Major General Uba, we have seen how difficult it can be to draw down peacekeeping missions. The force of the United Nations Mission in Liberia has undergone a significant reduction since resolution 2333 (2016) was adopted last December. The 2017 presidential and legislative elections are now six months away. How is the remainder of the force being prepared to provide a back up role for security during the elections? Finally, as we continue our review of peacekeeping operations, we expect to see drawdowns in other missions. What other lessons learned from UNMIL's drawdown can be applied usefully to other missions?

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and the Force Commanders of the four missions for their informative briefings.

China would like to pay tribute to the Force Commanders and peacekeepers of all United Nations peacekeeping forces in active service for their extraordinary courage and dedication. We also extend our condolences to the families of all those peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

The current international situation is undergoing profound change. Peacekeeping operations face ever increasingly complex environments and mandates, and we face serious challenges in carrying out effective peacekeeping operations. Informative briefings enable the Security Council to have a broad understanding of peacekeeping operations in the field and of the efforts made by peacekeepers to deliver their mandates. I would like to make the following four points in response to the briefings made by the Force Commanders.

First, the basic principles of peacekeeping operations are still of great relevance as guidance in the new context. The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the consent of the parties concerned, impartiality and the non-use of force, except in self-defence and for the defence of mandates, are the irrepressible constants of peacekeeping operations. Such operations should properly handle the relations with the host country, respect its sovereignty and heed its views and suggestions. In line with the wishes of the host country, the Security Council should appropriately address the issues of an exit strategy for peacekeeping missions.

Secondly, peacekeeping operations are tasked with proactively taking forward the process of seeking political solutions to regional hotspot issues. Some of those issues are protracted and persistent and lead to the steady deterioration of the security situation in the region concerned and in some mission areas, there is no peace to keep. That has had a serious and adverse impact on the fulfilment of other peacekeeping functions and responsibilities. The international community should therefore have a greater sense of urgency and redouble its efforts to promote political solutions to regional hotspot issues. Peacekeeping operations should achieve synergy and coordination to create an enabling environment for achieving political solutions to the hotspot issues.

Thirdly, it is important to improve upon the mandates of peacekeeping operations, making them realistic and actionable. In recent years, the protection of civilians has become one of the mandates for the relevant United Nations peacekeeping missions. The implementation of that mandate should be predicated upon respect for the ownership of the host country and should articulate the scope, conditions and

terms of reference of implementation, so as to be a useful supplement to the actions by the host country. Given the limited material resources, at the level of implementation and policy, we should develop specific rules governing the protection of civilians.

Fourthly, we must ensure a smooth transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, development and reconstruction. United Nations peacekeeping operations should make timely adjustments to the mandates and size of missions, in the light of specific conditions and developments in the situation on the ground. They should strengthen coordination with actors such as countries in the regions concerned, regional and subregional organizations, United Nations development agencies, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Peacekeeping operations should also undertake efforts to meet the needs of the host country, provide tailored support to help with security capacity-building and assist the host country in achieving self-reliant development at an early .

Nine out of sixteen United Nations peacekeeping missions are in Africa. The first 12 top troop-contributors are African countries. Strengthening communication and coordination with African countries in the area of peacekeeping is an inevitable requirement for effectively improving peacekeeping operations. China supports the United Nations in carefully listening to the views, suggestions and concerns of African countries in the area of peacekeeping operations. China strongly supports African peacekeeping capacity-building.

China has been a staunch supporter of and an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations. It is the largest troop-contributor among the permanent members of the Security Council and second largest contributor to the peacekeeping budget. China is fully implementing the commitments announced by Chinese leaders concerning our support for United Nations peacekeeping operations. We will increase our communications with the Force Commanders in the field, and we stand ready to join other Member States in efforts to improve peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Kandeel (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to thank Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and the Force Commanders for their comprehensive briefings. Allow me express our deep appreciation to them for their efforts and sacrifice in the service of international peace and security and stability in conflict areas.

Over the past two years, the United Nations has witnessed the development of the peace and security framework, a process that has been based principally on the review of United Nations peacekeeping operations. In the face of the varying security situations that vastly complicate conflict, we are duty-bound to reform peacekeeping operations and to provide the capabilities necessary to confront the new challenges. Hence, peacekeeping operations should be considered in the framework of a response continuum to conflict situations so as to insure that the mandates of these operations include integrated political, programmatic and operational approaches, which can be summarized in the following six points.

First, no peacekeeping operation should be unrealistically burdened with objectives that go beyond the mission's capabilities or that do not take into account political and security realities on the ground.

Secondly, exit strategies for operations are needed. They should have clear criteria and a set time frame, which should be reviewed periodically so that the Council can adapt and develop mandates based on field requirements, as opposed to engaging in a predetermined, cost-cutting exercise.

Thirdly, strategic partnerships have to be built with the host countries. Such partnerships should be based on national ownership, conciliation and negotiation, thus contributing to the success of peacekeeping operations and avoiding hindrances that may affect their performance.

Fourthly, we must concentrate on building national security capabilities so as to enable the State concerned to take up its civilian-protection responsibilities and avoid State dependency on the peacekeeping operation, which would only complicate and make more difficult the exit in future.

Fifthly, we must create an integrated United Nations system for multidimensional assessment that takes into account the effectiveness of the United Nations peace and security architecture as a whole, in a way that ensures the integrity of roles undertaken by the various United Nations and international organs, programmes and agencies, and all according to a holistic view to achieve the sustainability of peace and address the root causes of conflicts.

Sixthly, the partnership between the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries should be enhanced

in implementing the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations within the general framework adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 71/278 of 10 March.

Let me take this opportunity to stress Egypt's full support for peacekeeping operations. That is reflected in our desire to participate in the most difficult United Nations peacekeeping operations, particularly the those in the Central African Republic, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We provide the highest possible level of pre-deployment training, as well as the appropriate equipment required to implement the mandate.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Uruguayan presidency for organizing this important and much-anticipated interaction with the general officers in charge of specific peacekeeping operations. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and the general officers in charge of the military components of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for their briefings on important issues so critical to the success of peacekeeping.

Allow me to begin by paying tribute to them and to the more than 100,000 peacekeepers deployed around the world. Without their everyday actions, their personal commitment and their courage, and that of their soldiers, the men and women who have demonstrated, very recently, in the Central African Republic and Mali, their acceptance of the ultimate sacrifice, in what state would our world, already so weakened by the proliferation of crises, be? How many civilian lives have been saved by the Blue Helmets, who are increasingly confronted with direct and often asymmetrical lethal threats? Let me assure them of our admiration, our trust and our support for their noble task. Let me also assure them, above all, of the constant care taken within the Security Council to provide them with the mandates, means and political support necessary to ensure the success of their missions.

It is our responsibility within the Council to fully understand the challenges that they and their soldiers face, including the complex environments and security threats. We do that by listening to them today, and even more so through regular dialogue with troop-contributing countries, which now takes place systematically each time the Council takes the initiative to renew a mandate.

Today, I would like to highlight three key points that underpin their day-to-day work.

First, we are mindful of the smooth conduct of their military operations, both during the pre-deployment training phase, the deployment phase, of course, and the withdrawal phase. That would not be possible without integrated planning in New York among all the actors of the Security Council, Secretariat, the troop-contributing countries, and also the host States. That integrated planning must also continue on the site of the activities, through coordinated action by all constituents. That is the key to their success.

Secondly, I would also like to stress the importance of giving them the means to carry out their mission. That is our responsibility and our commitment. We have a duty in the Council to ensure that they deploy with the best trained troops. To that end, I would like to stress the importance of the regional peacekeeping conferences, in particular that held in Paris in October 2016, which was devoted to peacekeeping in French-speaking environments and during which language training and the importance of interaction with the local population were highlighted.

It is also important that their troops be deployed without hidden national restrictions and with acceptable and standardized protection capabilities, as well as with facilitating capabilities that will enable them to conduct their operations under the best conditions in terms of efficiency and protection. We hardly even need to underscore here the crucial importance of having a fully coherent and unified command structure on critical capacities. Here I would stress medical- evacuation capacities, which must be available around the clock, seven days a week, because threats do not stop on the weekend or at night. I would also mention the equipment that is needed to protect against improvised explosive devices in cases where troops face such threats in their theatres of operation.

Thirdly, and finally, we must be very clear with regard to robust peacekeeping. If we ask Force Commanders to implement robust mandates, then we commit ourselves for our part to provide them with all of the necessary political support as well as

adequate capacity, in full accordance with their rules of engagement, which must also give them the means to successfully accomplish their mission. This is our moral commitment towards them.

This annual meeting with Force Commanders is vital in order to enable them to share their current concerns; they should never hesitate to turn to us. We in the Council consider them to be our armed branch in the service of international peace and security.

Allow me to conclude my statement by once again paying tribute to the Force Commanders. Their current peacekeeping profession is not an essentially military one, perhaps, but it is a task that only the military can carry out with such success. I thank them warmly once again for their exemplary commitment in the service of peace.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): It is common knowledge that today the world situation warrants a greater engagement on the part of the United Nations in the area of peace and security. Sustainable de-escalation and progress in achieving peaceful settlements and peacebuilding are not possible, in most cases, without a robust international security presence. It is also an axiom that the Council has to craft each and every peacekeeping operation's mandate carefully and update them accordingly based on reliable and full information from the ground.

In this regard, today's briefing has practical value, and I should like to express my sincere gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General and the Force Commanders for their valuable input.

Among the many potential improvements that could be made, I believe that the United Nations could benefit greatly from sophisticated technologies to assist its peace operations. To miss such opportunities means missing chances for peace, as has happened far too often in the past. In this regard, I would like to echo the point that was made in several consultations of the Council on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF): the use by a force of relevant, sophisticated technologies remains one of the priorities yet to be achieved. I am aware of the intention of the Secretariat to explore options to deploy sense-and-warn technologies to the mission and would appreciate it if the Council could be updated on progress in that area.

I would like to reiterate our view that UNDOF remains one of the important cornerstones of the long-term stability of the region. In this regard, I commend the efforts aimed at the return and further consolidation of UNDOF's presence in the area of separation.

I should like also to touch upon the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), as other speakers have done. I believe that the United Nations peacekeeping presence in the Central African Republic is more than vital in supporting the efforts of the country's new leadership to achieve peace and stability throughout its territory. The continuing presence and increasingly violent activities of armed groups is leading to numerous casualties among civilians, the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, and an increased number of internally displaced persons.

As Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, I should like to express serious concern regarding the information provided by the Panel of Experts on the regular inflow of weapons and fighters into the Central African Republic from neighbouring States.

As previous speakers have done, I condemn all attacks and provocations against MINUSCA, including the brutal killings of peacekeepers, as well as the most recent attack against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. These actions are unacceptable and may constitute war crimes.

Liberia will soon mark 14 years of peace since the lengthy and bloody civil war in that country. The security situation in the country remains stable, and the Government has demonstrated its ability to effectively ensure security on the ground. At this point, the crucial task is a timely transition from peacekeeping to effective United Nations peacebuilding measures.

I look forward to the country's peaceful and democratic transition of power in October this year. This should represent a genuine milestone for the nation and a success story for the United Nations. Ukraine is proud to be among those troop-contributing countries that have played a part in this success by actively contributing to United Nations peacekeeping efforts in Liberia.

Ukrainian troops also continue to serve in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in

the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose mandate the Council recently updated (see S/PV.7910). The Mission must pursue its force-transformation process in order to become an flexible, agile and mobile force that can adapt to the current challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation also supports prioritizing the Mission's talks on the protection of civilians.

In conclusion, I should like to take this opportunity, on the eve of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, to join my colleagues in paying tribute to all United Nations Blue Helmet. Their devoted service is universally recognized as the most meaningful symbol of our Organization. Through the Force Commanders, I thank all of them.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): First of all, I should like to join previous speakers in extending gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Commanders on the ground for their effective and informative briefings.

I should like to express my gratitude to all peacekeepers for their service. I also convey my condolences in connection with the six United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) peacekeepers who have lost their lives over the past two weeks. Since the military component of each mission comprises troops from various troop-contributing countries (TCCs), the role of Force Commanders is extremely important in ensuring a mission's unity, effective command and control and a high standard of conduct and discipline.

But in addition to the role of Force Commanders, it is crucial to improve TCC capabilities in order to enhance the performance of each mission's military component. Japan has been contributing to the capacity-building of TCCs and plans to further strengthen these efforts.

I turn now to a few mission-specific issues.

First, with respect to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), we are concerned by the situation in Kasai and are following it closely. We take an interest in how the efficiency and performance of MONUSCO have been enhanced since the adoption of resolution 2348 (2017) and the transformation of the force and in how MONUSCO can respond to the rising violence in Kasai after the reduction of the force.

The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is fluid as we approach the elections, and relations between MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are important.

On MINUSCA, we are deeply concerned by the rising violence against the Mission and civilians in the south-eastern part of the country. We call on all armed groups to halt the violence and lay down their weapons. We support MINUSCA's proactive and robust posture throughout the Central African Republic, including in Bambari and Banguassou. Regrettably, in Banguassou both MINUSCA personnel and civilians have lost their lives. Enhancing MINUSCA's capability to fully implement its protection-of-civilians mandate is therefore important.

We are closely following whether the pilot model in Bambari for restoring State authority can be reproduced in other areas, as well as how security-sector reform is progressing.

Finally, on UNMIL, the upcoming elections and the peaceful transfer of power will represent both the fruits of UNMIL's labour over the past 13 years and one of the Mission's final tasks. To meet this challenge, UNMIL and the United Nations country team will have to work closely together to ensure that the key functions are successfully transferred to the United Nations country team before UNMIL's departure

Mr. Woldegerima (Ethiopia): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix and all the Force Commanders for their respective briefings. We also join others in paying tribute to the brave men and women who are serving in different peacekeeping missions around the world under the United Nations umbrella as we mark International Peacekeeping Day tomorrow.

We would like to focus our remarks on the unprecedented challenge faced by peacekeepers today, as explained by the Force Commanders in their presentations to us. As one of the major troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping, we share the issues and concerns raised by the Force Commanders. There is no doubt that peacekeepers are increasingly deployed to protect civilians and support complex political processes amid ongoing fighting in high-risk situations characterized by asymmetrical threats.

Targeted attacks against peacekeepers and innocent civilians are not only on the rise but they have increasingly become the norm rather than the exception. The recent incidence of attacks that led to the deaths of peacekeepers in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali are clear indications that these threats are growing in scale, frequency and complexity. It is therefore imperative that peacekeeping missions adapt to changing security dynamics. For this reason, devising the right political strategies and operational approaches has never been so critical. In this regard, we would like to suggest the following.

First, and this has been reiterated by many, the need for pragmatic and flexible interpretations of the basic principles of United Nations peacekeeping cannot be overemphasized. The traditional peacekeeping versus peace enforcement debate should add the minimum be looked at in a more nuanced manner. Peacekeepers cannot and should not remain indifferent in the face of significant threats either to themselves or to innocent civilians whom they are supposed to protect. What the Force Commanders said today is instructive, and there is really a need to look at this issue.

Secondly, peacekeepers should have robust mandates with a clear concept of operational rules of engagement based on a thorough situational analysis, threat assessment and planning. This will allow them to have a robust posture in defending themselves and in protecting civilians in the face of mortal danger. However, having a clear mandate, concept of operation and rules of engagement is not enough.

Therefore, my third point is that peacekeepers need to have sufficient capacity that is credible enough to deter spoilers who threaten the mission's mandate, civilians and peacekeepers themselves. We need to ensure that peacekeepers have adequate equipment, including force enablers and multipliers, to be able to counter hostilities and fulfil their mandate effectively in an asymmetrical environment. Peacekeepers must also get adequate training and acquire the skills that are needed to operate in a volatile security situation.

We know that these things are easier said than done, and we have no illusions that the strategic and operational challenges that were mentioned previously will be easily overcome, but in the light of the seriousness of the matter it is imperative that they be addressed as promptly as possible. Otherwise, the commitment to the protection of civilians will remain mere words to be repeated *ad nauseam*.

Finally, I do not wish to add more questions to what has already been asked by other delegations, as some of the issues we wanted to raise have already been raised. I simply want to conclude by thanking all the Force Commanders for their efforts under difficult circumstances.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia wishes to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his statement, and the four Force Commanders for their very informative briefings.

Bolivia joins in the previous expressions of words of tribute for the valuable lives of soldiers and civilian personnel that have been lost in the fulfilment of their duties in the implementation of the mandates of the various missions and, in particular, with regard to the recent events in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. We also wish to pay sincere tribute and express our thanks to each and every member of United Nations peacekeeper contingents around the world. They are sparing no effort to fulfil their missions and implement their mandates, despite the limitations, including insufficient resources, difficult conditions on the ground and challenging security environments. It is also necessary to thank the countries that contribute personnel military, police, observers or civilian personnel for their generosity, solidarity and commitment to the United Nations system and to countries that are suffering from conflicts and instability.

Bolivia has been committed to its membership through its actively participation in peacekeeping operations, contributing militarily since 1995 to missions such as the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola, the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, and United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. The proper selection of personnel and the training received at the peace operations battalion training have made it possible for our soldiers to be part of a select group

of military personnel throughout the world with the excellent qualifications they have received.

The international context is undergoing significant transformations; it is not and will never be static. The constant threats to international peace and security by terrorist groups highlight the need for peacekeeping missions to be subject to structural changes that will enable them to adapt and repel these threats more efficiently. The threatening environments of extreme violence and volatility, in addition to the influence of terrorist groups, have led to the tragic loss of life in missions. Bolivia reiterates its vehement rejection of such actions.

We emphasize the efforts of the Security Council to achieve the objectives of each of the existing mandates. The unity of everyone involved is essential on the ground to strengthen the financial, tactical, operational and strategic aspects, in strict accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and respecting the principles of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States.

Finally, it is important to improve the material equipment of peacekeeping missions so that they are able to control the areas where crises arise with the primary purpose of fulfilling their mandates. Therefore, effectiveness should also be achieved through continuous coordination and exchange of information among missions and local authorities. It goes without saying that no peacekeeping mission can succeed if it does not have the support of the host country.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix for his assessment of the current state of affairs in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We thank the Force Commanders of the United Nations peacekeeping from the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Mission in Liberia for sharing the state of affairs of their missions.

The nature of the issues raised by modern-day crises is changing significantly. In carrying out their mandates, United Nations peacekeeping operations have at various times come up against terrorist attacks on civilians and peacekeepers themselves, organized crime, and illicit trafficking in weapons and narcotics. The situations in countries where they are deployed and their respective theatres of operations each have their own special features.

United Nations missions are increasingly working in a context in which at least one side of the conflict is not a State. Instead, one of the sides is armed opposition or illegal armed groups. Furthermore, we have seen cases where a region with a traditional clash between two sides gets a third side that is not controlled by anyone. This was the case, for example, in the Golan Heights, where terrorist and illegal armed groups now run rife.

The trend in the Central African Republic is also a matter of concern, as there are ongoing intercommunal clashes, continuous extraordinary violence committed on religious and ethnic grounds, and widespread organized crime and gangs. Governmental and security bodies in many areas of the country are weak or totally lacking.

In these circumstances, peacekeepers need to act with utmost caution. It is more important than ever to respect the basic principles of peacemaking, that is, the consent of the parties; impartiality; the non-use of force, except in cases of self-defence; and respecting Security Council mandates. The loose interpretations that we have been hearing, based on the situation on the ground, are unacceptable.

We also must not allow peacekeepers to be directly pulled into conflicts, but this is exactly what happens if we get overly involved with robust mandates and even more with preventive responses to asymmetric threats. This also applies to offensive and counter-terrorist operations. It is unacceptable to take the concept of the protection of civilians as a pretext for the use of force by peacekeepers against the host State. That automatically turns Blue Helmets into a party to the conflict, provokes the Government and simply generates new violence.

In this context, we must be extremely cautious and balanced in approaching the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the Government and the opposition are having a hard time cooperating on the issue of implementing the December 2016 political agreement. Instead of overpoliticizing the subject of electoral violence and violations of human rights, there is a need to focus on assisting the Congolese in reforming the security sector and building the capacity of local security forces to counter lawless gangs in the

east of the country and to improve the military-political situation in country as a whole.

We must remember that the Government bears the primary responsibility for ensuring the security of the population, including by countering terrorist attacks, establishing a political process, ensuring development and eliminating the root causes of conflict. International assistance should be provided to support local and regional efforts, but not substitute for them.

With respect to the issue of increasing the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations while lowering financial expenditures, we note the need to improve approaches to mission planning, timely mission reconfiguration and drawing up exit strategies. It is puzzling that generic functions, such as addressing gender issues, peacebuilding and preventing the escalation of conflicts, are included in the mandates at the same time that a mission's capacities are being reduced. Let us consider, for example, the situation in Liberia where Blue Helmets are mandated simply with peacebuilding tasks. That is where we have room for a significant drawdown in the military and police components. Nevertheless, for some reason there are 700 armed peacekeepers and 5 military helicopters there.

Blue Helmets should be deployed where they can work effectively while remaining neutral. Let us not forget that the essence of peacekeeping is the absence of an alternative political settlement. That priority has also been confirmed by Secretary-General Guterres himself. High-quality, thorough political and mediation efforts should be the priority. The history of conflicts in various regions of the world has shown that this is the only way to eradicate the root causes of conflicts, as opposed to endlessly addressing their consequences. Otherwise, after a brief respite, crises are at risk of rearing their ugly heads again.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We commend and most sincerely thank the presidency of the Security Council, as well as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, for having this discussion, which gives us an opportunity to get firsthand insights on very important aspects and challenges of peacekeeping. The missions, represented in this Chamber by their Force Commanders, evidence the diversity of challenges that modern peacekeepers face: long-lasting conflict, the challenges of protecting civilians, and robust peacekeeping and peacekeeping operations drawdown considerations.

For the Security Council, it is very important to see how decisions taken in New York on specific missions are implemented on the ground. We have come to an understanding that, to deal with modern security challenges, there is a need to adapt the existing approaches and implement new strategies. As the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/446) states, United Nations peace operations are not appropriate tools for military counter-terrorism operations. In this regard, we acknowledge that regional forces are better able to fight them, as seen in the case of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia successful combating of Al-Shabaab. Therefore, we need multistakeholder approaches and greater corporation with regional and subregional organizations. The division of labour and even outsourcing for some peacekeeping tasks can be good incentives that will increase the overall effectiveness of our peace operations.

It has been highlighted during open debates on peacekeeping operations that we need more flexibility. In this context, and having practical experience and knowledge of the challenges of the current peacekeeping operations, we would appreciate hearing the vision of the Force Commanders on possibilities for greater flexibility in United Nations peacekeeping, especially on counter-terrorism issues.

With regard to drawdown considerations for peacekeeping operations, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is widely acclaimed as a success story in United Nations peacekeeping. Among the reasons for the success of UNMIL are the massive show of force, a clear and comprehensive mandate, a strong and capable Force Command and well-balanced military-police civilian components. An important point is that UNMIL reports provided candid assessments of the situations throughout the country. The experience of the United Nations Mission in Liberia shows that the strong political commitment of all stakeholders and effective coordinated peacekeeping operations bring real success in achieving peace.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that United Nations Force Commanders' recommendations, based on their rich experience and lessons learned, provide important input for increasing the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations and contribute greatly to the success of our common efforts to keep peace around the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing. I would also like to thank the Force Commanders of the United Nations peacekeeping operations for their briefings on the four subjects under consideration, which show the difficult reality and operational challenges they face in implementing their mandates.

I would like to refer specifically to the ability of a peacekeeping operation to fully meet all the goals that are assigned to it by the Security Council. Unfortunately, we see that many of the current missions have serious operational difficulties in fully accomplishing their tasks. We must therefore ask ourselves why the missions are facing these kinds of difficulties and what can be done to remove them.

With respect to the reasons why, we can identify various situations: Security Council mandates are not sufficiently clear or achievable; the human resources and equipment available for the missions often do not correspond to the tasks assigned or to the reality on the ground; the States or parties in control of the territory where the operations are being carried out impose or limit their full functionality through restrictions of movement or bureaucratic obstacles or, among other things, actions that constitute clear violations of status-of-forces agreements; the collapse or lack of an ongoing political process among the parties to a conflict, which leaves peacekeeping operations without room to manoeuvre and prevents them from being able to fully carry out their tasks; or specific cases of low staff performance or inadequate equipment, which negatively affects the fulfilment of mandates. In such situations, responsibility is shared between four principal stakeholders — the Security Council, the States or parties in control of the territory where the operations take place, the troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat. The Council has multiple responsibilities for ensuring the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

The design and deployment of peacekeeping operations should always be guided by political solutions, just as political momentum should always be maintained. For that, the political strategies on which peacekeeping operations are based must have the support of a united Security Council. On the other hand, even when the Security Council does present a united front, the United Nations cannot do much if the national actors do not show real commitment to a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

Another responsibility of the Security Council is to ensure that peacekeeping operations are more flexible, that they have clear mandates based on appropriate priorities and that they are able to adapt to changing realities on the ground. We have seen efforts made in that regard in the past few months in the renewals, for example, of the mandates of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, which have established tasks based on clearly defined priorities.

Much remains to be done, however. Also, once an operation has deployed under its current mandate, it is the host State's responsibility to ensure full respect and compliance with the terms of the status of forces agreement. The agreements protect the personnel that countries voluntarily contribute to peacekeeping operations and any violation of them prevents a mission from functioning properly and is therefore unacceptable.

As a country that has participated actively in numerous peacekeeping operations for many years, Uruguay considers the responsibilities of troop- and police-contributing countries extremely important, since it is they who are doing the work on the ground and implementing operational mandates. It is crucial to ensure that peacekeepers are adequately equipped, trained and prepared to carry out all the tasks in their mandate. In that regard, issues such as the existence of national restrictions — so-called caveats — that are announced ahead of time or, worse, not announced; a lack of effective command and control; refusals to obey orders; failure to respond to attacks on civilians; and inadequate equipment cannot be tolerated, since they undermine the shared responsibility for the effective fulfilment of mandates. That is why States signed the Kigali Principles, and we urge the major troop-contributing countries to review and abide by those commitments, which are aimed at improving the quality of troop contingents.

The Secretariat also has a crucial role to play in providing advice and recommendations on compliance with mandates and the necessary adjustments to be

made. We acknowledge the efforts that have been made in this area, particularly through the preparation of periodic reports on attacks on Blue Helmets or violations of status of forces agreements.

In conclusion, I have a question for MONUSCO's Force Commander. When the Mission's mandate was renewed, on 31 March, a decision was made to reduce the number of troops deployed. I would like to know the Force Commander's views on what the consequences have been for carrying out the Mission's mandate considering the current instability in the country.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the briefers to respond to the questions and comments, starting with Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix: I would like to thank all Member States for the comments and I will be brief, because we would also like to hear from the Force Commanders in answer to the questions raised.

There were a number of mentions of what I think is a key expectation for our peacekeeping operations — that is, adaptability and responsiveness. I would like to highlight a few points in that regard that I believe are key to achieving that.

The first is the issue of rules and procedures, which were mentioned by some of the Force Commanders. The Council is aware that the Secretary-General has launched an effort for reform in this area aimed at making it much simpler for operations to discharge their mandates. That is a key issue in responding to the serious expectations of those on the ground.

The second, which was also mentioned by several Force Commanders and Member States, is the need for an appropriate framework within which troop-contributing countries (TCCs) operate and that can be affected by statements of unit requirements and memorandums of understanding that in some cases are not adequate to Force Commanders' needs. Those we simply have to review and revise where necessary in order to give Force Commanders the flexibility they need where the use of resources is concerned.

The third element in this is mindset, for which all of us are responsible — Headquarters, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Force Commanders and troop-contributing countries. It is a willingness and determination to fully implement mandates and see that everyone interprets a mandate in the same way, as well as to ensure that the caveats and dual chains of command that have had negative effects on our operations are gradually terminated. In that regard, we are emphasizing and definitely expecting that we should be stricter and more demanding in our evaluations of operations.

The fourth element is capacities. As has been repeatedly pointed out, in order to be more agile, responsive and flexible, we need the necessary training and the necessary capacity. Someone mentioned new technology, and that is indeed being gradually brought into our operations, particularly with regard to having better situational awareness. And we are working very hard to attain the specific types of capacity that we need for many of our operations. Just before today's meeting, in fact, we had a force-generation meeting for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and I am grateful to the Member States that have committed to providing very important new capacities that I believe will make a difference to the force's ability to fulfil its mandate. In that regard, I would like to specifically point to our contingents' ability to use that capacity for training and the importance of bilateral cooperation for our TCCs, which need this kind of assistance in order to be better prepared to use the equipment that the operation requires.

I will touch briefly on the robust use of force.

(*spoke in French*)

Lieutenant General Keïta alluded at length and very interestingly in his briefing to the use of robust and legitimate force as provided for in our mandates. Implementing a mandate is also about implementing the political processes that our operations support, and therefore a reaction to those who try to interfere with or prevent the implementation of those processes, in which case the use of force can be entirely legitimate. However, using robust force is not enough, and the Central African Republic is particularly instructive in that regard. It must be accompanied by similarly robust efforts in the political arena. I think the same is true for the Security Council — just as our operations have robust mandates, they need the robust support of the Council at all levels, so as to hold accountable those who try to prevent us from fulfilling our missions.

I also want to touch upon the periodic performance reviews of missions, an expectation that has been

expressed by everyone — Member States, the Secretariat and, above all, the Security Council. In expecting more from the missions, we should not hesitate to call into question certain truths or demands that have hitherto been accepted as fundamental but are, perhaps, not quite so. The reference to troop numbers is a case in point, since the number of peacekeepers is less important than their ability to fulfil their mandate. In that regard, I believe we must also review our assessment criteria.

I want to briefly address the issue of transition. Although Major General Uba's statement was very enlightening in that respect, the support of the Security Council at all stages has been crucial. The inclusiveness of the transition process, in which host countries, stakeholders, civil society, agencies and bilateral and multilateral donors participated, was key to its success.

Finally, to endorse what Major General Menon said about sexual abuse, the determination of the Secretary-General and the Force Commanders to doggedly combat those acts is evident, and I can assure everyone that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is also fully committed to do the same.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Mgwebi.

Lieutenant General Mgwebi: In responding to the question posed by the representative of the United Kingdom on the principles of peacekeeping, I would say that the commanders understand those principles as they relate to consent, impartiality and the use of force, and even more so the use of force for self-defence. The critical challenge is to understand the use of force when it comes to defending the mandate.

Additionally, the language of the mandate of United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) uses terms like "terrorist operations", which then creates a special responsibility for the Intervention Brigade to act in accordance with the mandate. That situation is challenging, because when it comes to an armed group that has a base probably not too far from the mission's base, what does the mission do if that armed group is threatening the population, but has not done anything yet? Does the mission proactively attack the group or does it coexist with them? At present, the question of co-location and co-existence with armed groups is challenging. Even if the Intervention Brigade can overcome that challenge, it cannot be present all over the country at the same time.

With regard to intelligence, it is encouraging that the United Nations has at least accepted the term "intelligence" and has accepted to bring in technology in the form of unmanned aircraft, which do help when it comes to contentious issues. Some of the military radios at our disposal are not interoperable. With the use of technology, the various contingents can speak to each other using their own equipment, which bridges the gap.

In response to the question from the representative of the United States about assistance in moving troops, the Office of Military Affairs has helped by readjusting and revisiting the areas of responsibility as they relate to the boundaries of the various contingencies. Headquarters has granted our request to be able to move the rapid deployment forces within an area of responsibility without first seeking Headquarters' permission, which makes our life easier. We are also working with the Office of Military Affairs to revisit the statement of unit requirements so that we can respond as required.

As for the question from the representative of Japan about the enhancement of the force in the Kasai region, I note that, previously, there was no force stationed there. Recently, with the assistance of the Office of Military Affairs, we have been able to move two companies from Pakistan who were in stationed in South Kivu to the Kasai region. Now, we are only waiting for their vehicles, so they are ready to move. Even the boundaries of Pakistan's South Kivu brigade have been adjusted pursuant to consultations between the Office of Military Affairs and Islamabad, which makes life a bit easier. All those efforts are aimed at being able to cover the Kasai region.

The last question came from the representative of Uruguay, who inquired about the implications of MONUSCO's troop reduction. According to Headquarters, the Mission's strategic review speaks to the notion of force optimization, which means that we are looking at a number of capabilities that would give us the flexibility and versatility to be able to respond to possible challenges. We are also revisiting the contract we have regarding unmanned aircraft systems. We would like to increase our range of coverage and payloads, so that we can have greater situational awareness. In that way, small versatile companies can improve our ability to respond. The challenge, however, is to secure the necessary assets.

The President: (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Major General Menon.

Major General Menon: I will be brief in answering the questions that were raised during the meeting. As far as technology is concerned, I would like to assure the members of the Security Council that the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has conducted a detailed study of what additional technology needs to be brought in. We are building that capability but it takes some time. I can say that we have already brought in certain night-vision devices — which we did not have earlier in the mission. We are bringing in surveillance trailers, cameras and so forth. It is important that we understand national sensitivities when we bring in technology. Whatever technology we bring in, we share it with both Syria and Israel, and it is important that we keep up that dialogue with them. But I would like to emphasize that both nations very strongly support us in the endeavour of bringing in technology.

The question of sense-and-warn radar was raised. No troop-contributing country has offered UNDOF that capability, and Headquarters is therefore now looking into the possibility of acquiring the equipment on the open market. We are currently working on that. The issue of who will operate it and how it will be maintained — the logistic model — will have to be addressed. I would also like to say that we are in very close coordination with both Israel and Syria with regard to that particular equipment. They have been very forthcoming. I have discussed it personally with my Syrian interlocutor. He has been very forthcoming and open to it, but he has also told me that we need to share that information with his side, once that particular equipment has been identified. I am hopeful and confident that we will very soon be able to get that particular equipment to UNDOF.

As far as technology is concerned, we definitely require a greater amount. The Mission really started with nothing, since we were a very traditional peacekeeping mission, but things have changed. I think that the way forward now is to build up technology for the Mission.

With regard to the protection measures concerning which the United States representative inquired, I would just like to say that UNDOF used to operate in soft-skin vehicles. That has changed significantly. Now every person who comes to the Syrian side travels in an armoured, protected vehicle. We are now looking at getting armoured personnel carriers (APCs) to the Mission, so that we can stop using the earlier soft-skin vehicles. Any movement is carried out in very close coordination with both parties, Israel and Syria, so as to ensure that, when troops are moving, we keep them safe.

We are in the reconstruction phase. We have engineer platoons with us. When we went into Camp Fouar, the first issue on which we concentrated was to build up its force protection measures, which we have now strengthened significantly. I would also like to say that, despite the fact that we left those positions some time ago and some of them were vandalized, the force protection measures, such as bunkers, among others, are in a very good state. In fact, when we moved into Camp Fouar most of the bunkers did not require any reworking. They were in very good condition.

UNDOF's method of operation has also changed significantly. We will no longer operate in small teams or remain in isolated pockets, as we had done for the previous 40 years.

I have already touched upon the sense-and-warn radar, and I am confident that, once that equipment arrives, it will strengthen the force protection measures of the camp significantly.

As far as availability and capabilities are concerned, we are, as I said, a light infantry force that is now turning and metamorphosing into an armoured-protected capable force. It is being built up slowly. I would like to commend the Fijian contingent, which came in with APCs. They did not have that capability, but they went out and acquired it. Such was the case with the Nepal contingent, which brought in five APCs and will possibly bring in a mechanized company, because they turned to the open market to acquire that particular capability. But I sincerely feel that we need nations with capability to come in and assist United Nations missions in a crisis situation, rather than leaving the job to nations that do not have the capability and which have to go out and build it up. However, in the event that a nation that has the capability cannot come in, it then becomes imperative that we help others trying to bring in that capability in their efforts to build up their capabilities so that they can protect the missions in carrying out their mandates.

Headquarters is doing its utmost to build up the capability of UNDOF. The issue of capability versus

willingness is one that needs to be addressed. Ideally, we would have willing and capable forces, and we have to resolve that particular issue. United Nations missions definitely need to be flexible. We need to be agile and adaptive, and we have to keep up with changing conditions in the world. My personal opinion is that we continue to remain lacking in that regard.

Concerning the subject of the tripartite coordination mechanism, which was raised by representative of Italy, I would just like to say that both parties, Israel and Syria, very strongly support us. I enjoy extremely open lines of communication with both parties whenever a crisis situation arises. Nevertheless, although the tripartite coordination mechanism of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon is good, I would say that both parties have to agree on that particular issue.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Security Council for assisting UNDOF in its return to the area of separation limitation on the Bravo side, which took advantage of a great existing opportunity. With the support of the Security Council, we managed to move back into certain vacated locations earlier than expected. Once again, both parties, Israel and Syria, have strongly supported UNDOF's return to the Golan.

I will leave the Security Council with the following reflection. Who monitors the Golan? In my opinion, it should be UNDOF or the United Nations. Although some people call it a challenge, I will designate it as more of an opportunity, because both Israel and Syria strongly support us in our return to the Golan. Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to say that it was through the unanimous support of the Security Council that we were able to return to Camp Fouar during phase 1. I believe that we should subsequently move forward.

In the meantime, I would like to assure all members of the Security Council that UNDOF is up to the challenge and will do its best to maintain peace and stability in that area.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Lieutenant General Keïta.

Lieutenant General Keïta (*spoke in French*): I would first like once again to express our gratitude to the members of the Security Council for their support, and our acknowledgement of the sacrifices made by peacekeeping soldiers.

I will only briefly address the three questions asked, because I believe that the other Force Commanders have already provided information concerning them.

With regard to the representative of Senegal's question, the engagement of our helicopters in Bambari to confront a coalition was due to two basic reasons. The first concerned the very credibility of our mission. Would we stand by and watch one coalition attack another in the second largest city of the country, thereby allowing chaos and despair to reign over the civilian population?

The second reason was that, as Bambari is the second largest city, taking it would have meant the de facto division of the country in two, because it is the only remaining city that prevents the Central African Republic from being divided between the east and the west.Because of those two fundamental reasons, we were more or less forced to take decisive steps and the most suitable way to do that was to use our advantage. Our advantage over the rebel groups was in the air, which enabled us to be decisive and at the same time to ensure that our troops were not too vulnerable. Despite the fact that we had troops on the ground to handle the situation, we used the advantage we had, which was key to our efforts. It stopped the advance of the coalition into Bambari. We were compelled to use helicopters for those two reasons.

(*spoke in English*)

I received another question from the representative of the United Kingdom on how to mitigate the impact of red tape on peacekeeping operations. That is a very important issue but it is beyond the capability of the Force Commanders. I think that it is up to the Security Council, the Department of Peacekeeping Affairs and the troop-contributing countries to agree on the reason that we send soldiers to current peacekeeping missions. We have all understood that for 90 per cent of the current missions, there is no peace to keep. We therefore send the troops for some other reason, and that other reason is to protect civilians against armed individuals who kill civilians. It is therefore obvious that if the Council sends peacekeepers to deal with armed groups who kill, then they must be ready to fight. The peacekeepers cannot be put into that type of situation and have to deal with red tape and caveats that render them non-operational. If the missions are to be fully operational, then risks must be accepted and caveats removed. Troops must then be given the

ability to meet the protection-of-civilians challenges they face on the ground. I think that the problem can be solved at that level. At the moment, as soon as the troops land on the ground, there is too much red tape that we cannot circumvent.

The last question came from the representative of the United States about whether or not I have the right capability to deal with the worsening situation in the Central African Republic in order to achieve success in the country. I am very glad that the representative of the United States asked that question because the narrative is that the United States does not want to hear about additional capability. It wants the peacekeeping missions to do more with less. We have tried to do more with less but we have reached our culminating point. In military operations, when the culminating point has been reached, we can no longer move forward and then we lose ground. We have reached that culminating point. To prevent us from losing ground, we have requested additional resources. That requires investment to rightsize the force.

After Bambari, the threat has moved towards the south east. The south-east of the country was a very peaceful area throughout the conflict. For more than three years, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) carried out activities and the Ugandans, supported by the United States, dealt with the threat posed by the LRA. But while the conflict was moving south-east, at the same time the African Union and the Ugandans, supported by the Americans, started leaving and a vacuum was created. In addition, we do not have enough capability to move and fulfil the protection-of-civilians mandate, deal with the LRA threat to the civilian population and try to stabilize the area. Because Bambari was a success and a turning point, we have to preserve that achievement so that development investment can be made. Capability is therefore required just to make Bambari safe.

At the same time, as the Council knows, we have a centre of gravity known as Bangui, the capital of the country. We have to ensure the safety of everyone in Bangui, from the President to the smallest child. We have to keep that centre of gravity safe. We need a bit of investment to preserve the centre of gravity and the Bombari success, and fill the huge vacuum in the south east. We can then capitalize on that and make the mission successful. We ask that that request be considered and that it be a matter of urgency so that we can control and improve the situation to achieve success.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to Major General Uba.

Major General Uba: First, I would like to respond to the comments made by the Permanent Representative of Senegal, concerning the quick reaction force. The quick reaction force was established under the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Now that UNOCI has closed down, the force is being prepared and refitted for deployment to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). We understand the issues and the problems. MINUSMA is a just a short distance from there to Liberia, if the need arises and, at the same time, under inter-mission cooperation we are supposed to have the quick reaction force fulfilling an over-the-horizon mandate in Liberia. That simply means that the force that is being refitted must be flexible enough to provide that over-the-horizon capacity. It must be mobile enough to be able to move when requested and be able to adapt to the terrain in which it is going to operate.

When the force was a part of UNOCI, we had the opportunity to exercise with it in April 2015. The force came to Liberia and we had an exercise that went very well. At the same time, we saw the capacity of the force when it offered assistance in the Central African Republic. Now, the force has changed, which is quite normal, and its entire focus will also change. I am aware that the Office of Military Affairs is working on settling the unit requirements and the concept of operations of the force. It is expected that once all of that has been sorted out and the force is deployed in MINUSMA, we shall have the possibility of exercising together to understand each other.

The next point is on security in Liberia ahead of the upcoming October elections. According to resolution 2333 (2016), the Government of Liberia is responsible for ensuring security, as a result of the handing-over of security responsibility to the Government. That underscored the need for the final drawdown, which kept only a residual force in Liberia. It is also wise to mention that we have a force that is capable of only just maintaining the security of the United Nations and its assets. The military has a force of only 230 troops and the police force has just 260 officers. Those are the combined forces that keep the United Nations entities and equipment safe and provide a platform when an eventual force is required to assist the mission. In a

nutshell, we have just what is required for basic self-sustenance in the Mission.

Another aspect was elections-related assistance, which was mainly centred on logistics that suffered from critical gaps. UNMIL was mandated to assist where we observed critical gaps in logistics related to elections. At the same time, when it came to security, we were expected to interfere only when the situation threatened a strategic reversal that was not palatable to anybody.

With respect to lessons learned associated with drawdown, a lot has been learned through UNMIL. UNMIL has been a very important force, with all the paraphernalia of a multidimensional and integrated force. It interfaced with all facets of Liberian life. Now we have drawn down, we are left only with a residual force. The first aspect that we saw to be lacking was early preparation for peacebuilding. Peacebuilding in Liberia could have taken place much earlier. In a nutshell, peacebuilding should begin concurrently with peacekeeping in any mission so that the two can take place together. While we keep the peace, peacebuilding should be ongoing. We hope that Headquarters will have a look at that and adopt a critical approach to it so that there is no demarcating line where we say "Now we have finished peacekeeping we can roll back to peacebuilding", and so on. Development and peacebuilding should go hand in hand with peacekeeping.

At the same time, we have observed a trend whereby, when it comes to drawdown, there is a need for robust engagement. Naturally, a dependency syndrome will emerge when a nation that has been given everything suddenly sees its United Nations mission close. There is a fear and apprehension that the nation may revert to where it was at the start. There is therefore a need for early, robust engagement between the mission and the host nation. What this means is simply that, as a mission is deployed, a time line and specific benchmarks should be set so that an exit strategy can be worked out in the meanwhile. We should be able to say that a mission is likely to last two or three years, and within those years we want the mission to achieve a, b and c, and then drawn down and close. Inasmuch as that is not a given, it leaves leeway for a mission to keep gallivanting, neither here nor there, until such time that the Security Council may decide to end it.

In a nutshell, a key lesson was that the transition programme should be all-encompassing and involve the host nation, international partners, strategic partners and even the downtrodden people of the host nation. They should all be taken on board in order to ensure that they understand the concept of drawdown, mission closure and departure.

The meeting rose at 6.45 p.m.